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INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEH AR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1848
RUEH DS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1972
RUEH RL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0545
RUEH BY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1249
RUEH DK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1606
RUEH KM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2028
RUEH NR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4459
RUEA IIA/CIA WASHDC
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RHMFISS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1099
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000244

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AF/S FOR S. HILL,
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
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STATE PASS TO USAID FOR E. LOKEN AND L. DOBBINS
STATE PASS TO NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE: ELECTION EVE UPDATE

REF: A. PRETORIA 604

[1](#)B. HARARE 233
[1](#)C. HARARE 228
[1](#)D. HARARE 206

Classified By: Ambassador James D. McGee for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) With less than 15 hours before polls open, our assessments remain essentially the same. The MDC and Morgan Tsvangirai have strong and still-growing support. Rigging

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remains the primary obstacle to a Tsvangirai victory, either on the first or second ballot. Additionally, Tsvangirai and Simba Makoni have entered into an informal alliance to expose and oppose vote rigging, and it appears they are trying to coordinate a response to a proclaimed Mugabe victory. While post-election violence is a concern, the scope of possible violence is lessened by the fact that Mugabe has little support in the military and police, many of whom are seeking a Mugabe defeat. END SUMMARY.

Opposition Support...and an Alliance

[1](#)2. (C) Tsvangirai enjoys continued and growing support throughout the country. In the rural areas, many people who previously voted for ZANU-PF are fed up; most of these will vote for Tsvangirai. Equally important is strong antipathy toward Mugabe from within the ruling party. An associate of Solomon Mujuru told us he spoke for Mujuru and most members of the party Central Committee and Politburo when he said it was time for Mugabe to go--as soon as possible. Mujuru realized that Makoni's support was thin; he would support

Tsvangirai as an alternative to Mugabe.

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13. (C) Tsvangirai told the Ambassador this week that he had spoken to Mujuru, and that Mujuru had pledged support should Mugabe try to steal the election through force, or otherwise.

Separately, we understand that the Tsvangirai and Makoni forces have been talking to coordinate a response to a fraudulently-claimed ZANU-PF victory.

Rigging

14. (C) Rigging remains a major concern. Vulnerable points include fraud in registration, corruption of election officials at polling stations and tabulation centers resulting in manipulation of the counting of ballots, and fraud committed by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission in announcing results. Makoni and Arthur Mutambara held a press conference yesterday (which Tsvangirai was supposed to participate in, but he was "urgently" called away), and said they and Tsvangirai had discussed rigging and responses to it. They discussed fraud that they had uncovered including a ward in which 8,000 people were allegedly registered which was actually an open field. Mutambara and Makoni said they were consulting with Tsvangirai on a common response to rigging.

Violence

15. (C) All signs point to Mugabe claiming victory whatever the reality of voting. (COMMENT: Given the strength of Tsvangirai's support and the erosion of support for Mugabe,

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we cannot completely discount a Mugabe defeat, even with rigging, but such a scenario is unlikely. Mugabe and his surrogates have stated in so many words that they would not accept an opposition victory. END COMMENT.) While the actual opposition response remains to be seen, both Tsvangirai and Makoni have stated they would not accept a

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fraudulent Mugabe victory and have implied their supporters would take to the streets to protest. This could provoke a violent response on the part of the government. Unlike in the past, however, high-ranking military officers and much of the rank and file are opposed to Mugabe. ZANU-PF contacts have told us they are skeptical the military and police would respond as vigorously as Mugabe might wish.

Other News

16. (C) Several sources have told us that Mugabe now has a Russian plane at his disposal and that he will leave the country after voting, probably to Malaysia. He has done this in the past, and we don't read too much into it at this point. Should the situation in Zimbabwe become problematic, though, it would be more difficult to control from outside the country.

17. (C) A Politburo meeting scheduled for last week and cancelled was rescheduled for Wednesday of this week. It was again cancelled late yesterday after Mugabe arrived late in Harare after a campaign rally outside the city. Failure to hold a meeting may have been a result of Mugabe's desire to avoid a confrontation with Mujuru.

¶8. (C) Mujuru failed to come out and publicly oppose Mugabe before the election. Several sources have told us that, although Mujuru opposes Mugabe, their estrangement is permanent, and that Mujuru believes Mugabe will lose, Mujuru is hedging his bets in case Mugabe survives the election so that he can actively oppose him from within.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) Our best bet at this time is that Mugabe will successfully rig the election and claim victory. That said, we are in uncharted waters. Opposition to Mugabe is as strong as it has ever been; most notable is the strong opposition from within the party and from erstwhile comrades in arms such as Solomon Mujuru. The election and post-election could play out in ways that are not now obvious. END COMMENT.

MCGEE